

**Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in Wisconsin's Wild White-tailed Deer  
Frequently Asked Questions about the Washburn County CWD positive deer plus  
additional CWD information.**

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***What is Chronic Wasting Disease?***

CWD is a nervous system disease of deer, moose, and elk. It belongs to the family of diseases known as transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs) or prion diseases. CWD occurs only in members of the cervid or deer family, both wild and captive. It has been found in wild and captive deer and elk in 18 states and two Canadian provinces.

**Where did the Washburn County CWD positive deer come from?**

A 3 ½ year old doe was showing clinical signs consistent of a sick deer and appeared emaciated with the hair falling out. The doe was on a small parcel of private property west of Shell Lake. It was laying down and could be walked up to and touched. This deer was tested for CWD after being euthanized by the Sheriff's Office. Tests at the Wisconsin Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory and the National Veterinary Services Laboratories have confirmed this deer had CWD.

**What is the previous furthest north location for a wild deer to test CWD positive?**

The previous furthest north location for a wild deer to test positive was a yearling doe within the CWD Management Zone in Sauk County. The distance between the locations of the Sauk County deer and the Washburn County deer is 186 miles.

**Has any CWD surveillance been done in this area?**

Yes, two rounds of CWD surveillance has been conducted in Washburn and surrounding counties. The first took place in 2002 following the first identification of CWD within Wisconsin. A second round of surveillance was completed during 2007 and 2008. No deer tested positive for CWD or TB (bovine tuberculosis) during these previous rounds of testing.

**How many wild deer have been tested in the four counties potentially affected by this finding?**

In the previous two rounds of CWD surveillance (2002 & 2007-2008) in Washburn, Barron, Burnett, and Polk counties, a grand total of 3,683 wild deer have been tested. A breakdown by county is as follows: Washburn (1,105), Barron (784), Burnett (958), and Polk (836). No deer tested positive for CWD during these rounds of testing.

**Will additional wild deer be tested?**

Yes, as has been done in similar situations, the department will conduct surveillance to better assess the extent of CWD in this location. Surveillance will be targeted to adult deer within a 10-mile radius of this positive deer.

**How will the additional sampling be done?**

The surveillance will primarily rely upon obtaining tissue samples from hunter-killed deer during the 2012 hunting seasons. Hunters will be able to bring deer for disease testing to cooperating deer registration stations, meat processors and taxidermists. The specific location of these sampling stations will be available in mid-August. In addition, we will work with local car-killed deer removal contractors to supplement our sample collection as well as work to remove any sick deer reported by the public.

**How many deer samples would DNR like to collect?**

We would like to collect at least 300 samples from adult deer within a 10-mile radius of the positive deer location. This number will provide a strong picture of the extent of the disease within this area.

**Will the deer feeding and baiting regulations change?**

According to state statute the DNR is directed to prohibit the feeding and baiting of deer in any county that is within 10 miles of any captive or free-roaming deer that tests positive for either CWD or TB. This CWD-positive deer is within Washburn County and is within 10 miles of Barron, Burnett and Polk counties. We will be creating a GIS map that looks at a 10 mile radius from where the deer was found. It is likely that a ban on baiting and feeding could be in effect this fall, in these counties.

**Will the planned deer seasons for this fall change?**

No, the deer seasons and antlerless quotas recommended for this fall will not be changed with the discovery of this CWD+ deer.

**What should I do if I observe a deer that appears sick or is acting unusual?**

Landowners and other persons within the 10-mile surveillance zone who observe a deer that appears sick and/or is displaying unusual behavior are encouraged to contact the department quickly. If the landowner or person is capable, the department will provide a verbal authorization to euthanize the deer. To contact the DNR call the info line at 1(888) DNR INFO.

During the fall hunting seasons, hunters who encounter a deer that appears sick are encouraged to harvest the deer. The hunter should attach a valid carcass tag and transport it to one of the DNR-designated sample collection sites. The hunter will then be issued a replacement tag. If a hunter does not have a valid deer carcass tag, they can contact DNR for verbal authorization to shoot the deer. At that time, the hunter will be instructed to bring the deer to one of the collection sites to have the deer tested.

**Who else has DNR been working with on this situation?**

Since this is the first positive CWD wild deer test result in the Ceded Territory, DNR has been communicating with tribal leaders and the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC). In addition, DNR has been in communication with local community leaders, USGS National Wildlife Health Center, Conservation Congress members, USDA Veterinary and Wildlife Services, and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

### **What is Wisconsin's plan for dealing with CWD in our wild deer herds?**

The Natural Resources Board approved a 15-year CWD Response Plan in 2010 outlining the following goal: Minimize the area where CWD occurs and the number of infected deer in the state. You can learn more about the Response Plan at [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov) and enter search keyword "cwd".

### **Why should people care about the disease?**

As this newest CWD-positive test result demonstrates, CWD is a statewide issue. Projections based on current Wisconsin CWD data suggest that CWD will ultimately reduce the number of deer available each year for hunter-harvest. A healthy deer herd is important to our hunting heritage. Wisconsin has more than 600,000 deer hunters who regularly harvest 300,000 to 400,000 deer annually. Deer hunting provides more than 7 million days of recreation every year and annually generates more than \$500 million in retail sales and over \$1 billion in total impact to the state's economy. A healthy deer herd is critical to the state's economy.

### **Does CWD pose a health risk to humans?**

CWD has never been shown to cause illness in humans. For several decades CWD has been present in wild populations of mule deer and elk in western states. During this time there has been no known occurrence of a human contracting a prion disease from eating venison from a CWD infected deer. Additionally, here in Wisconsin, the incidence rate of Creutzfeldt Jacob Disease (CJD), the prion disease in humans, is detected at the same rate as in the rest of the world, about one in a million.

The Center for Disease Control, the World Health Organization, and the Wisconsin Department of Health Services recommends that people not consume meat from deer that test CWD-positive. Some simple precautions should be taken when field dressing deer in areas where CWD is found including:

- **Wear rubber gloves** when field dressing your deer
- **Bone out the meat** from your deer
- **Minimize the handling** of brain and spinal tissues
- **Wash hands and instruments thoroughly** after field dressing is completed
- **Avoid eating** brain, spinal cord, eyes, spleen, tonsils and lymph nodes of harvested animals. (Normal field dressing coupled with boning out of a carcass will essentially remove all of these parts)
- **Request that your animal is processed individually**, without meat from other animals being added to meat from your animal

### **How is CWD transmitted?**

Current information indicates that CWD may be transmitted both directly through animal to animal contact and indirectly from a CWD-prion contaminated environment. Recent studies indicate that CWD prions exist in the saliva, urine, and feces of infected deer. Prions shed from an infected individual bind to the soil and can persist there for long periods of time.

### **Can CWD be transmitted to livestock?**

To date, there has been no documented occurrence of livestock contracting CWD from free ranging deer or elk. Furthermore, in long-term studies where cattle have been housed in pens with CWD-infected deer, transmission has not occurred. And, even with experimental oral exposure to CWD, cattle did not develop the disease

In studies where cattle were infected with CWD by direct injection into the brain, many of the cattle developed the prion disease. These experiments show that CWD can be transmitted to cows, but infection is highly unlikely via natural forms of transmission. There are similar findings from CWD infection studies with sheep and goats. Farmed deer and elk, however, are highly susceptible to CWD and farmed cervid CWD management is as important as wild deer CWD management in our state.

**If we let nature take its course, won't deer become completely resistant to CWD?**

Researchers have investigated for genetic resistance to this disease within white-tailed deer. Unfortunately, no white-tailed deer genotypes have been identified with complete resistance to CWD. Researchers have found an uncommon genotype that appears to allow deer to survive longer with CWD than other genetic types, but they still eventually die from CWD. This research also implies that deer with this genotype also have more time to expose other healthy deer to CWD.

**Will the deer rehabilitation regulations change?**

By administrative code, DNR can prohibit rehabilitating some wildlife species in certain areas of the state to protect against spreading disease, to protect public health, or to prevent harm to the environment. Current deer rehabilitation policy prohibits rehabilitating deer within 10 miles of any SWD or TB positive captive or free-roaming deer. Accordingly, since the Washburn County CWD-positive deer was within 10 miles of Barron, Burnett and Polk counties, this spring DNR will likely issue a deer rehabilitation ban in this area.

**What should I do if I observe an orphaned fawn?**

First and foremost, most fawns are not abandoned and the doe is probably nearby. Best policy is to leave the fawn alone and contact DNR for guidance. This is especially important as any captive wild deer from any county where deer rehabilitation is prohibited cannot be moved out of the county and must be humanely euthanized and tested for disease. Humane euthanasia can be performed by department staff, the local Police Department, a wildlife rehabilitator with an Advanced License, or a veterinarian. To contact the DNR call the customer service line at 1(888) DNR INFO (1-888-936-7463